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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN, UKRAINE, EU, NATO, IRAQ, US.;BERLIN

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¶1. Lead Stories Summary

The Frankfurter Allgemeine led with Iran's plans to enrich uranium, while Sueddeutsche Zeitung and Tagesspiegel dealt with the special FDP meeting in Berlin. Die Welt carried an interview with metalworkers' union leader Berthold Huber, and Berliner Zeitung led with the purchase of data on tax evaders. Editorials focused on the Munich Security Conference and the debate about the purchase of tax data. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with reports on the Munich Security Conference.

¶2. (Iran) Nuclear Program, Enrichment

All media carried (2/8) lengthy reports and editorials on the dispute with Iran over its nuclear program. Many papers also carried photos showing President Ahmadinejad with goggles at the Iranian Center for Nuclear Sciences, where he called on the country's nuclear agency to enrich uranium. Headlines included: "The madman of Tehran shocks the world - Ahmadinejad orders enrichment of uranium" (mass tabloid Bild), "West wants sanctions" (Sddeutsche), "Ahmadinejad: We don't want to waste any time with playing games" (Frankfurter Allgemeine), "New provocations from Tehran - Foreign Minister Mottaki does not show any willingness to reach a compromise, his country wants to enrich uranium." (Berliner Zeitung).

Deutschlandfunk (2/7) radio opined on Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki's visit to the Munich Security Conference: "Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki made a fool of himself at the conference.... The

fact that he did not even prepare the united bunch of security experts on his President's upcoming decision to begin enriching uranium made his visit a complete farce."

ARD-TV's late-night Tagesthemen (2/5) newscast noted: "We should not give this regime the acknowledgment it is seeking. We should put democratically legitimized screws on them: a list with names of people who are responsible for human rights violations, no visa for them, freeze their foreign accounts and stay tough on the nuclear dispute. If we negotiate with them individually, than people in Iran will wonder whether we have forgotten them and wonder why they are risking their lives. What will we tell them?"

Frankfurter Allgemeine (2/8) editorialized on its front page: "The governments of the West, including the German, must prepare themselves for an escalation of the nuclear dispute with Iran. Tehran just played with the West again. Tehran is perfect at gambling for time by raising hopes. Patience is necessary in this conflict, but also determination to keep its word: Iran has the right to use nuclear energy, but the Iranian regime must not obtain nuclear weapons. 2010 will be an acid test for the states of the western community and all of those who do not want to accept Islamist terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Sddeutsche Zeitung (2/8) remarked: "This was a real provocation by the Iranian regime, which lampoons anyone who wants to make the mutual relationship more reliable. Foreign Minister Mottaki's attendance in Munich and the timely supporting measure by President Ahmadinejad can only mean that the government in Tehran does not

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know anything about diplomacy or has already made up its mind about the nuclear program, which would make an agreement with rest of the world (apart from China, which obviously shields this path) impossible.... All this triggers a dangerous dynamic, which provides support to those who favor military strikes. But caution: before talking about a military approach, the all other measures must be applied. Now is the time for new sanctions. Rarely before was the West with its well-intended offers so duped. Even China cannot ignore this at the UN Security Council. Iran has damaged itself last weekend. Sanctions must be decided this month."

Handelsblatt (2/8) wrote: "The leadership in Tehran showed shortly prior to the anniversary of the Iranian Revolution that it is not a serious negotiating partner. Although the Western attitude has not been consistent for many years, the Ayatollahs were given a unique opportunity after the inauguration of the U.S. President to repair relations with the West. However, this window of opportunity is closing. Tough sanctions by hopefully all countries seem to be the only way to prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb. The People's Republic of China should therefore join in."

FT Deutschland (2/8) stated: "Tehran continues its game of poker - with an increasingly weak hand. The surprise visit of Foreign Minister Mottaki at the Munich Security Conference was supposed to be a smart move. However, instead of impressing the West, he increased frustration and provoked a U.S. Senator to consider aloud a military strike against the regime. Mottaki's offer is Iran's most recent tactical maneuver within a long-term strategy of making deceptive offers to the West to gamble for time. Time, in which Tehran can continue to build a nuclear weapon.... The West cannot accept this one-sided deal. The EU should insist on additional embargos at the UN and - if China is opposed to it - walk it alone. If Iran wants to prevent new sanctions, it must clearly improve its offer."

13. (Ukraine) Outcome of Elections

Only a few papers (2/8) carried editorials on the outcome of the elections because the counting was not concluded. Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported under the headline: "Julia Timoshenko Defeated," and reported: "The previous opposition Victor Yanukovich narrowly won the Ukrainian presidential elections. According to the preliminary results, Julia Timoshenko did not succeed in enlarging the number of supporters in the densely populated Eastern Ukraine."

Frankfurter Rundschau headlined: "Tense Quiet in Ukraine," and reported that "The West is closely following the elections in Ukraine. Ukraine is an important transit country of the EU for Russian gas."

Tagesspiegel (2/8) carried an editorial under the headline: "Back on the Map," and opined: "This was simply a democratic election in a democratic country and even election winner Yanukovich will be unable to change the basic course of the country. There is no other successor state of the Soviet Union in which such a degree of freedom of opinion, such a penchant for controversial discussions and where so many democratic rights exist as in Ukraine. President Yushchenko has achieved even more: He gave back Ukraine its national memory. The newly elected Ukrainian president can hardly abolish this. We owe it to Yushchenko that Ukraine, the second largest European country is back on the political map as an independent actor and not considered a Russian colony. This is the standard against which Victor Yanukovich will be measured."

In an editorial, Sueddeutsche Zeitung (2/8) argued: "Indeed, there are many indications of election manipulations in favor of Victor Yanukovich...but in contrast to 2004, there are little indications that Timoshenko could succeed with her protests this time, because the weariness with politics is massive following all the conflicts among the leading personnel in Kiev, but primarily because of the

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financial crisis. We can assume that she will hardly be able to mobilize the masses again. Timoshenko was at the top of the government for the past two years and many make her responsible for the financial crisis, for rising unemployment, and drastic wage cuts. Many other politicians could not have reacted differently but she was at the wrong place during the crisis, for which she is by no means responsible; and she was unable to free herself from this trap. This is sad because Timoshenko always created attention for her country because of her personality."

14. (EU) Deficit Worries

Under the headline: "Fear About Greece - EU Wants To Solve Crisis on its own," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (2/8) reported: "The Europeans want to resolve the debt crisis about Greece on their own - without the assistance of the IMF. At the G-7 finance ministers summit in Canada they promised this to the other industrialized nations. Experts expect the euro to be under constant pressure because of the financial misery in several other EU countries." Finance Minister Schöble said that 'the Europeans are able to resolve this problem and cope with it.'"

Frankfurter Allgemeine (2/6) judged under the headline: "Risk State Bankruptcy" that "At risk is nothing more than the continued existence of the European Monetary Union and thus the stability of the common currency, the euro. The European Commission, which was duped by the Greeks for much too long, has now referred to the last means laid down in the European Treaties and put Greece's finances under receivership.... But those who think that stable countries in an act of solidarity should help shaky countries will do the European idea a disservice because they would then create incentives for all countries to violate their treaty obligations. Nothing would weaken the euro more than a violation of the central issue of finance policy discipline. If the monetary union threatened to be turned into a community of debt, all Europeans would pay in the form of a devaluation of the euro and pensions."

National radio station Deutschlandfunk (2/6) commented: "The German government, too, ignored the mismanagement in Athens for years, but it did that not by mistake but with full political intention. For the governments in Berlin only one thing was important: Brussels should by no means interfere in national economic policies. But Chancellor Merkel realized much too late that Germany cannot be indifferent to Greece because we cannot risk a Greek state bankruptcy that could inevitably pull other euro states into an abyss. That is why the euro zone must help Greece...and prepare for a worst-case scenario. This is in particular true for the biggest euro state, Germany. One thing is certain: If the EU must save Greece, then Germany would have to pay in any case. The German

government must finally accept this and inform Germans about this uncomfortable truth and draw the necessary political consequences. The most important one is: The monetary union needs a common economic policy and the EU must interfere in euro-states that deviate from this policy. This must be true for all EU member states, including Germany itself."

Tagesspiegel and Frankfurter Rundschau (2/8) carried an editorial, headlined: "Chain Reaction," and judged: "Greece's financial crisis was foreseeable for a long time and that is why the EU partners must also be blamed for the misery. The Greek government is unable to go far beyond the current austerity programs if it does not want to risk social unrest. That is why the EU partners have no other choice but to help Greece. Otherwise a chain reaction would be looming which could, in the end, result in a meltdown of the monetary union. It is true that the European Central Bank and the individual national banks are not allowed to offer emergency loans but it is conceivable to have the EU structural fund pay low interest loans of the European Investment Bank or offer a common euro bond of all 16 member states of the monetary union. But

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Germany and other euro countries are opposed to it. However, they have no other way but to grasp the nettle."

Under the headline: "Get the IMF Involved On Time," Handelsblatt (2/8) editorialized: "Has Europe really everything under control and is it really able to manage the debt crisis of its Mediterranean members without international assistance? The positive answers may reassure the G-7 but the markets will hardly be convinced of them. A precondition would be that the governments realize the dimension of the financial crisis 3.0 and that they would be able to point a way out of the debt trap. But this is not the case. The Greek epidemic has already infected Spain and Portugal. Italy, Ireland and even the UK could be the next candidates, and it could be possible that the financial markets will test their ability to pay. But instead of looking for a sustainable solution, we hear primarily political slogans to hold out. It would be better if the Europeans would now call the IMF for help. The IMF is not only much more experienced in crisis management but also has the political independence to call for painful adjustments. That is why Europe, in its own interest, should shed old skins."

Regional daily Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten (2/8) judged: "The euro is facing hard times. Only ten years after the introduction of the common currency, it is in a serious crisis. Following Greece, Portugal is also facing a state bankruptcy. Spain, Ireland, and Italy could soon follow. At the latest then when the large European countries will be dragged into the maelstrom at the capital markets and are unable to place new bonds, the common currency will be threatened with disintegration, irrespective of whether the European Commission imposes fines because of the high budget deficits or cuts subsidies."

15. (NATO) Istanbul Defense Ministers Meeting

Frankfurter Allgemeine (2/6) judged under the headline: "Challenging," that no one likes to dismiss NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen's remark that 2010 will be a 'challenging year' for the NATO mission in Afghanistan. With a new strategy, more and better trained Afghan security forces and more NATO soldiers, ISAF commander McChrystal wants to regain the initiative in the fight against the Taliban. But this also means that there will be more people killed on both sides and also among the civilian population. There are still 4,000 trainers missing and this is a challenge for solidarity, without which an alliance cannot function in the long run. In the meantime, the German debate centers solely on a withdrawal. Again the German government is deceiving itself."

In an editorial on 2/6, die tageszeitung opined: "The medicine that NATO has now prescribed for Afghanistan does not even deserve the term 'placebo.' It will not heal the sick but it should allow the doctors to leave the sick room. NATO knows that the conflict cannot be resolved militarily. That is why a withdrawal would be a capitulation, and that is why police forces are now to jump in. But police officers do not attack heavily armed guerilla forces--they

fight crime and control traffic."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (2/8) editorialized on its front-page: "NATO soldiers have been fighting in Afghanistan for nine years. Hundreds of them were killed, particularly last year. It is therefore no surprise that criticism is increasing in most Western countries, although the objective of the mission is to prevent the country from becoming a base for transnational terrorism again. The German defense minister called this skepticism a healthy democratic reflex.

If Senator McCain is right, even more soldiers will be killed in 2010. Criticism, which does not just reflect concerns over the lives of soldiers, will increase further. Will politicians be able to cope with it? ... Western countries and politicians must show endurance and strong leadership. The newly agreed strategy is promising as long as all partners stick to it and keep their

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promises."

Deutschlandfunk (2/5) radio remarked: "Many questions are still unanswered and some are even new after the conference on Afghanistan. Why do NATO generals say only in background talks that Germany's intention to dissolve the rapid reaction force in Afghanistan contradicts the plans Germany explicitly at NATO? Why are there statements coming only from outside that, given such an attitude of the Germans, the U.S. is now considering taking over the command in the north? Should this not be discussed at a conference like that in Munich?"

Regional tabloid B.Z. of Berlin (2/6) noted: "The demand to give NATO more and more funds is too simple. There are enormous possibilities to make savings in the military alliance. Instead, each partner in parallel to the others is developing its own weapons and transportation systems. Even uniform standards are a thing of the future. Synergy effects, as they exist in the economy, are very rare in NATO. The defense ministers should begin here. The military must make savings, too."

16. (Iraq) Parliamentary Elections

In an editorial under the headline: "Far Away from Peace," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (2/6) argued: "The parliamentary elections in Iraq are happening under a bad star. Partisan bickering is increasingly burdening the vote. But as a matter of fact, it would really offer a last chance to close the Iraqi ranks before the U.S. withdrawal in August. If only a small part of the population does not recognize the outcome of these elections, there will be no national reconciliation seven years after the beginning of the war. And without the U.S. forces as armed referees, the Iraqis would soon attack each other again. Iraq is far away from any hoped for stability. The increasing number of terrorist attacks is evidence of the fact that the militants have by no means been defeated. A few months before the U.S. withdrawal, time is working for the underground fighters. They feel strong again and evidence of this is the fact that they are intensifying their attacks."

17. (U.S.) Budget Deficit

Under the headline: "Washington's Greek Illness," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (2/6) editorialized: "In the long run, the issue [in the financial markets] is America. The future of the global economy depends on whether the United States is able to put its finances in order. Momentarily, it seems to be beyond any doubt. U.S. bonds are considered to be a safe heaven for investors from all over the world. But they ignore an important part of reality. Washington is increasingly demonstrating symptoms of the Greek illness. The federal deficit is the highest ever in times of peace. But Congress does not seem to be capable of reacting to it. The expenses for the healthcare system and social security are out of control but no one is able to stop the march into bankruptcy. In the interest of the global economy, it is to be hoped that the U.S. politicians will perceive reality faster than the financial markets."

MURPHY